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Christ All in All:

A S E R M O N

PREACHED AT THE

“CHURCH OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN,”

SUNDAY, SEPT. 1, 1872,

(FIRST SERMON AT THE BEGINNING OF A TEMPORARY PASTORSHIP  
OF SAID CHURCH.)

BY

C. D. BRADLEE,

LATE PASTOR OF THE “CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER.”

“If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.”

ST. JOHN vii. 37.

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## CHRIST ALL IN ALL.

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“IF ANY MAN THIRST, LET HIM COME UNTO ME, AND DRINK.”—  
ST. JOHN vii. 37.

IN former days, the great question with all true men was, Will Christ accept us? Now, the New School, the men who say that they are governed by intuition alone, exclaim, *Shall we accept Christ?* Once it was the great aim of all men to get their names written in the “Lamb’s Book of Life.”

Now some are really in doubt as to whether they ought to insert the Lamb’s name in their own book of life. I have no wish to put a brake upon the wheels of reformation. I have no desire to speak slightingly of intuition. I would not utter a word of ill-will towards any class of thinkers. Honest doubt should always be treated tenderly. Yet I cannot help thinking and stating that the retreating of faith, at the present time, from the person with the authority of Christ to some standard of the mind’s own conceiving, betokens a decay somewhere of true religious vitality, whilst it is a main-road and the chief passage-way to a thorough scepticism.

I am well aware that some of the very best men are champions of the new light. Yet the great question is, *not what they are, but what will their successors be?* They are well enough, for they are sweetened in their whole nature by the prestige of their early education: they have climbed to their great goodness by the ladder of faith; and, although they have upset the ladder, they have taken care not to do so until they have arrived at the top. Not so with their successors. They will have no early education to nourish them. They will have no ladder to climb. They are thrown back entirely upon themselves, just as their ancestors were previous to the blossoming of Christianity. I fear that they will have bleeding feet, with crushed hearts. The doctrines of the Rationalistic School appear to me to afford but very little substantial nourishment. They are set forth, I allow, with a rhetoric that dazzles and burns, but which never reaches the true depths of the heart, and never stirs up heavenly echoes. We are thrown back by this school directly upon our own souls, that are really too weak to bear such a heavy strain. It is just as if you went to sea in a beautiful ship, and every thing seems to go wonderfully well. Good timbers, fine cabin, spacious deck, gentlemanly captain, intelligent sailors. Ah, you are very fortunate! But by and by there comes a heavy storm, then your vessel is driving towards the rocks. You look for the only thing that will save you, a heavy anchor. *It is gone.* Nay, it was never put on board, because, forsooth, the builder thought you could get along well enough without an anchor.

The Jews started in just such a ship, and got stranded ; so also in a somewhat similar conveyance the followers of Mahomet, with the heathens of old. They all dashed against the breakers. I think it the duty of every preacher, in these days of conflicting thought, occasionally to state emphatically where he stands. I do not suppose that in any congregation all will agree with the Pastor ; but all will, I think, give him full liberty to cherish his convictions, whilst they will applaud his honest avowal of them.

I frankly therefore confess to you this day, *that I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ*. I believe also that those who look upon Him as a mere man, or as one having faults, should at once renounce His name, taking a title that will be more justly expressive of their faith. I believe that Jesus was specially commissioned to teach us about God, and that His words *are with authority*. I believe in the Divinity of His nature, and in the holiness of His precepts. I believe that He came down from heaven where He pre-existed, that He might teach the children of men. To me He is the Image of God, and the only Mediator between me and the Father. I believe that His main effort was and is for our salvation.

I think that He meant a great deal, and that the invitation is fresh now, when He said, "If any man thirst, let him come unto *me*, and drink." Let our lesson then this morning be, our Master, all in all, the fountain of faith, the consecrator of discipline, and the bestower of victory. Look at the faith of Jesus : did it not yield refreshing waters ? He believed in Himself from the

time that He was twelve years old till the moment that His earthly body perished on the cross. It was a faith that never blossomed into presumption, and never faded into idolatry. He always knew how far to go, and when to stop. He always recognized His own prerogatives, and God's as well. He ever, by the depth of His serenity, and by the intensity of His courage, sent a deep awe, even upon the hearts of His bitter enemies.

Oh, then, let us, like Him, have a proper faith in ourselves! This is a preliminary necessity to all greatness and all goodness. Only believe that you can be what God thinks you ought to be, then you will have half gained your true character. A lofty conception, a devout resolve, and a sweet-scented aspiration are the early morning streaks of light that strike athwart the heavens, which prophesy the on-coming noon-day splendor. Oh, watch them as they come! oh, hasten them on! and let the regal glory bathe with its spiritual richness your perfected life. Again, Christ had faith in the office that He was ordained to fill. He knew that it was just the place for His hands and His heart. No matter how dark some of the days were that He spent, He had no desire to step out of His position, and no wish to relinquish His grand undertaking. So He teaches us to make duty sweet, hardship a serene pleasure, and our ordained lot a splendid benediction.

Once more, Christ had faith in God. He knew that He would never be forsaken by the Ruler of the Universe. He always saw His Father at the helm.

Only at one second in His experience did He apparently waver, crying, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" but very soon exclaimed, "Into Thy hands I commit my spirit." So are we to look to God, with an unshaken trust. So are we always to repose under the soothing thought of His benignant mercy, under the kindling conception of His close companionship, and under the august confession of His unlimited power. Heavenward we should often gaze, and thus should the human heart get its calm and its glory. Our Lord was also the consecrator of discipline. Run your eyes through His experience, and see how in every bitter hour He wove golden threads that entwined His own heart with God's. He is never at a loss what to say or what to do. Temptation melts into a thin vapor, as it strives to clasp His will. Pain becomes a wand set in heavenly diamonds, as it strikes His earthly frame. Death, like a coward, shrinks into life, as it strives to make Him a victim. He seems to make every thing subserve to the glory of God, whilst all events with Him are but so many steps that lead to the Eternal Throne. Thus should we strive to consecrate our discipline.

May our temptations in like manner dissolve into mist. May our pains and sorrows also reveal the golden side. May we make every experience that greets us but the opening of the gate that leads into the City of the New Jerusalem. Oh, how interlined this life of ours with lights and shades! How it sparkles at times! then again how the shadows creep on! Oh, its tangled thickets, and as well its rich orchards! Oh, its spacious



valleys, and as well its rugged mountains ! Oh, its deserts of Sahara, or its gardens of Paradise ! How shall we understand the mixture ? How shall we tear away the veil ? Only as we breathe the spirit of Jesus. Only as we gently take His hand. Brethren, every thing depends upon the way in which we interpret this rushing time. Do we marshal events under the clear light of Eternal Wisdom ? or, like poor, sickly cowards, do we tessellate them together under the sombre light of our morbid sensitiveness, and under the wretched logic of our demented self-will ? Do we spell out their promise, reading off their spiritual power ? or do we, with our dyspeptic souls, make them reveal only their ugly visage, offering to us simply their stern greeting ? Are they received with a beautiful patience, with a sublime courage, and with a throbbing piety ? or with an unreasoning petulance, with a palsied timidity, and with a sceptical sneer ? Do we say to events, *God bless you ? or God curse you ?*

Once more Christ is the bestower of victory. In His own life He exemplifies it, whilst He makes it plain in our experience if we are faithful. He overcame ; so now He reigns evermore, the Head of the Church, and the appointed Judge of the world. He rose and He ascended, then He was placed at the right hand of God. There was a little darkness, then came triumphant light.

A few years He seemed to be enveloped with trials, then came the eternal coronation. So, dearly beloved, is His life somehow a model for ours. Learn of Him that fidelity must some time have its fruitage in blessed-

ness. Every good soul will get its crown some day, however dark the present. Earthly restrictions or abasements amount to nothing. God can, with one word, sweep them all into oblivion. Though the prairie rose blush unseen in a desert place, God can and God will find it : then He will make known its beauty. Oh, be joyful, because you know that victory is written over every earnest prayer, is clasped round every stern endurance, and encircles every noble deed ! *Perhaps not to-day, perhaps not to-morrow ; but at some time the glory must come.*

“If any man thirst.” Thirst ! *Why, we are all thirsty.* We are continually parched in our minds and in our souls. We cry out for light, strength, and peace, but Nature cannot afford us much help. It is not large enough, nor rich enough ; above all, *it is voiceless.* Intellect is not massive enough to answer the heart’s deepest yearnings. Nothing merely earthly will give us what we want. O God, bathe us in the living waters ! Blessed mystery, unceasing goodness of the beneficent Father, we are not pleading in vain. Nay, before we speak, before we even are conscious of the want, a voice, like that of old which called Samuel, speaks our name, whilst a heart is waiting on which we may rest.

Are you students, searching for light, with tumult at the soul ? I hope so ; I pray so. Are you asking what is life ? why am I here ? what must I do ? where am I drifting ? God grant it may be so ; for out of the heavens issues the glorious invitation, “Come unto me, and drink.” Go with a sweet, confiding

love to this Teacher. Go without a vestige of a doubt. Turn your soul inside out to His gracious search. Then shall you be answered, then shall you be cheered, then shall you be cleansed, and then shall you be crowned.

How go? Why, just as a child goes to a father, — just as any obliged person goes to a benefactor, — humbly, gratefully, and joyously.

In order to become Christ-like, you are not obliged to give up being man-like. No, the better you become, the more thoroughly will you develop your manhood. Standing at the side of your Master, and pressing His hand, you will become a nobler husband, a kinder wife, a holier parent, a more devoted child, a more trustworthy brother or sister, a more pleasant neighbor, and a more loyal citizen. Perhaps, however, some will yet say, notwithstanding what has been advanced, that they believe in self-management, that they can be their own deliverers, and that they desire and need no Christ. Our own right arm is enough, they say: our own brave will shall suffice.

Seriously, my friends, *do you believe that?* Do you know of any one, since Adam took his first breath, that has stood up *alone*? Has not all personal strength been shattered? Are you only, of all the human beings ever created, to be the exceptional cases?

Then, again, may not your right arm be shattered by disease, and may not your adamant will fly to the four corners of the world, impelled by the antics of insanity? You may tell me, perhaps, that if you were sure of the claims of Christ, you would gladly follow Him. Well,

find a better Guide than our Lord, if you can. If you do not at present know of any better one, follow Him, the Lord, *until the better one appears*. Or you may tell me that you have serious doubts about a future existence. You say, therefore, that, so far as this world is concerned, you feel at liberty to follow the light of your own eyes. I beg leave to differ with you.

Let it be, for the sake of argument, that there is no other life. Call the grave the end. Yet quite as much, *nay, all the more*, do you need the precepts of Jesus Christ, that you may be saved from shame, and that you may be kept from despair. Let every thing go that Jesus says about the celestial kingdom, if you must, then manage your life only by those teachings that are adapted for the present hour, and you will splendidly illuminate even the short term of your earthly breath, and you will cause the pulsations of time to scintillate with glory. There is every reason, therefore, why you should take Jesus Christ for a Leader and Saviour, whilst every excuse offered for your reluctance so to do scatters to dust the moment it is sifted by the logic of right and righteousness. Will you not, then, seek refreshment at this great Fountain? God is waiting for each one of you to say, *Yes, I will*.

Such have seemed to me thoughts worthy of expression on this first Sunday of our *temporary*, and perhaps lasting, communion, under the agreed fellowship of pastor and people. I would not come to you even for a few weeks or months without defining my position,



showing my Christian flag, disclosing my Leader, and making it clearly understood where I stand in the ranks of the Church.

I am not ashamed of Jesus Christ. *He is my all in all*: my Leader, my Judge, Redeemer, and Immanuel. Blessed be His holy name. Would that I were more worthy of His beautiful companionship, and in more strict affiliation with his blessed precepts. So, for you all, I pray that you may grow more like Him, our Lord. Let us each and all hold His outstretched hand; let us each and all lean upon His gracious heart; let us each and all obey every utterance of his splendid voice, and at last may all in this Church be led by Him to God, and introduced under the grand proclamation that nestles so sweetly in the prayer of the Son of God, "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, which Thou hast given me; for Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world."

Oh, may each of our souls utter the prayer of the poet whose name is unknown, but whose heart beats in time and tune with our hearts! for he exclaims, —

"Shepherd of souls, refresh and bless  
Thy chosen pilgrim flock,  
With manna from the wilderness,  
With water from the rock.

"We would not live by bread alone,  
But by Thy word of grace,  
In strength of which we travel on  
To our abiding place.



“ Be known to us in breaking bread  
 But do not then depart —  
 Saviour, abide with us, and spread  
 Thy table in our heart.

“ Then sup with us in love divine ;  
 Thy body and Thy blood —  
 That living bread and heavenly wine —  
 Be our immortal food.”

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NOTE. — Mr. Bradlee has been engaged to supply the pulpit of the “ Church of the Good Samaritan,” from September 1st, 1872, to April 1st, 1873 ; and, should it be found feasible, the worshippers in the “ Church of the Good Samaritan,” and those who formerly attended the “ Church of the Redeemer,” will form together one independent society, under the pastorate of Mr. Bradlee.



















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